

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 NEAE-00 ACDA-07
AGRE-00 AID-05 CEA-01 CEQ-01 CG-00 CIAE-00 EPG-02
COME-00 DLOS-09 DOTE-00 EB-07 EPA-01 ERDA-05
FEAE-00 FMC-01 TRSE-00 H-01 INR-07 INT-05 JUSE-00
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 NSF-01 OES-07 OMB-01 PA-01
PM-04 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 /134 W
-----031617Z 055880 /45

P R 031518Z JUN 77
FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6991
INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY RABAT
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI
AMEMBASSY VALLETTA
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON
EUCOM
COMSIXTHFLT
USDOCOSOUTH NAPLES
SECDEF WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SSCTION 1 OF 2 TUNIS 3913

TEL AVIV PASS SENATOR STONE

CINCUSNAVEUR AND EUCOM FOR POLADS; USDOCOSOUTH PASS CINCSOUTH
FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, PLOS, ENRG, TS, LY
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SUBJECT: TUNISIAN MEDIA TREATMENT OF CONTINENTAL SHELF DISPUTE

REF: TUNIS TUNIS 3845

1. SUMMARY: MEDIA COVERAGE OF CONTINENTAL SHELF DISPUTE
OVER LAST THREE DAYS HAS PROGRESSIVLY TONED DOWN "CRISIS/ TREATMENT
ALTHOUGH DISPUTE STILL DOMINATES FRONT PAGES AND IS LEAD ITEM

ON RADIO AND TV NEWSCASTS. NEWS REPORTS ON DISPUTE NOW EMPHASIZE DIPLOMATIC EFFORTS TO SEEK PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT RATHER THAN GIVING SOLE PLAY TO SERIOUSNESS OF CONFRONTATION AND ENORMITY OF LIBYAN ACTIONS. GOT PRESS GUIDANCE HAS PROSCRIBED ANTI-AMERICAN REPORTAGE AND ALL PAPERS HAVE FOLLOWED THIS LINE, GIVING PROMINENT PLAY TO OFFICIAL USG STATEMENTS CRITICAL OF PARTICIPATION OF AMERICAN COMPANY AND SUPPORTIVE OF TUNISIA'S EFFORTS TO MEDIATE DISPUTE. NEVERTHELESS, WE HAVE NOTED A SHARPLY NEGATIVE REACTION AMONG PRIVATE TUNISIANS TO ROLE OF AMERICAN DRILLING COMPANY IN DISPUTE. END SUMMARY.

2. JUNE 3 PRESS CONTINUES TO GIVE FRONT PAGE ATTENTION TO CONTINENTAL SHELF DISPUTE WITH LIBYA BUT TONE OF NEWS ARTICLES HAS SWITCHED FROM ONLY DEPICTING SERIOUSNESS OF CONFRONTATION TO EMPHASIZING ALSO DIPLOMATIC EFFORTS TO FIND SOLUTION. ALL PAPERS REPORT THAT GOT FOREIGN MINISTRY DIRECTOR FOR ASIA AND AFRICA (SODOK BOUZAIA) HAD SEIZED THE SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE OAU IN YAOANDE OF THE DISPUTE. STATE DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN'S STATEMENT EXPRESSING DISAPPROVAL OF INVOLVEMENT OF AMERICAN FIRM IN DRILLING OPERATION WAS ALSO FRONT PAGED ALTHOUGH PRESS ALSO REPORTED DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN CONFIRMATION THAT "PLATFORM HAD BEGUN OPERATIONS." PRESS REPORTED THAT ARAB LEAGUE SECRETARY GENERAL MAHMOUD RIAD HAD CALLED FOR A MEETING OF TUNISIAN AND LIBYAN AUTHORITIES TO DISCUSS DISPUTE.

3. ALL PAPERS REPORTED AS WELL THAT LIBYAN HIGH REPRESENTATIVE IN TUNIS, ABDELHAMID ZENTANI, HAD MET WITH PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA
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AND HAD GIVEN HIM DOCUMENTS FROM COL. QADHAFI CONCERNING THE CONTINENTAL SHELF DISPUTE. DETAILS OF MEETING WERE NOT MADE PUBLIC.

4. DEPARTURE STATEMENT BY SENATOR STONE IN TUNIS ON JUNE 2 WAS ALSO GIVEN HEAVY ATTENTION IN THE PRESS AND ON RADIO AND TV NEWS PROGRAMS. COVERAGE EMPHASIZED HIS REMARKS THAT THE USG SUPPORTS TUNISIA'S REQUEST FOR ARBITRATION OF THE DELINEATION DISPUTE WITH LIBYA AND THAT THE AMERICAN COMPANY THAT OWNS THE DRILLING SHIP IS ACTING WRONGLY BY BECOMING INVOLVED, CONTRARY TO ADVICE OF USG, BEFORE THE DISPUTE IS SETTLED.

5. JUNE 2 PRESS ALSO GAVE CONTINENTAL SHELF DISPUTE HEAVY PLAY. MOST PROMINENT NEWS ITEM IS OFFICIAL COMMUNIQUE ON CLOSED SESSION OF NATIONAL ASSEMBLY HELD ON MAY 30 TO HEAR GOT OFFICIALS EXPLAIN DISPUTE AND TUNISIA'S POSITION. FOREIGN MINISTER CHATTY GAVE ASSEMBLY DEPUTIES HISTORY OF PROBLEM AND PRIME MINISTER NOUIRA ASSURED THEM THAT GOT IS DETERMINED TO DEFEND

TUNISIA'S LEGITIMATE RIGHTS AND TO PRESERVE ITS SOVEREIGNTY AND REGIME. HE URGED RENEWED SUPPORT FOR NATIONAL UNITY IN ORDER TO MAKE IT POSSIBLE TO STAND UP TO ALL CHALLENGES. COMMUNIQUE ON SESSION ALSO NOTED THAT SEVERAL DEPUTIES QUESTIONED THE POSITION OF THE U.S. GOVERNMENT CONCERNING THE AMERICAN COMPANY THAT IS WORKING ON BEHALF OF THE LIBYANS. JUNE 2 PRESS REPORTED ALSO THAT GOT PERMREP AT UN IN NEW YORK HAD INFORMED SYG WALDHEIM OF DISPUTE.

6. PRESS OF JUNE 1 EMPHASIZED "VICTORY DAY" CELEBRATIONS, AND NATIONAL ASSEMBLY'S CALL FOR "UNITY AND VIGILANCE". GOVERNMENT-CONTROLLED DAILY "LA PRESSE" GAVE DETAILED HISTORY OF BOUNDARY DISPUTE SINCE 1968, AND OUTLINE OF TUNISIAN CLAIMS AND THEIR LEGAL JUSTIFICATION.

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TEL AVIV PASS SENATOR STONE

CINCUSNAVEUR AND EUCOM FOR POLADS; USDOCOSOUTH PASS CINCSOUTH
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7. EDITORIZLISTS HAVE BEGUN SHIFTING THEIR ATTENTION SOLELY
FROM CONTINENTAL SHELF ISSUE TO OTHER QUESTIONS, NOTABLY THE
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MIDDLE EAST DISPUTE AND DOMESTIC ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT POLICY.

8. COMMENT: NATIONAL ASSEMBLY PRESIDENT SADOK MOKADDEM TOLD
US PRIVATELY THAT QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR DURING MAY 30 MEET-
ING OF ASSEMBLY WERE ESPECIALLY CRITICAL OF US, BUT THAT FOR-
EIGN MINISTER CHATTY IN HIS REPLIES HAD EMPHASIZED MODERATING
ROLE USG HAS SOUGHT TO PLAY IN AFFAIR VIS A VIS READING AND
BATES. MOKADDEM ALSO TOLD US THAT ASSEMBLY SESSION WAS BEHIND
CLOSED DOORS - THE SECOND TIME THIS HAS BEEN DONE SINCE INDE-
PENDENCE - IN ORDER TO EXCLUDE PRESS AND AVOID MAKING PUBLIC THE
EXTENT OF CRITICISM OF US THAT WAS EXPECTED TO BE VOICED BY
MEMBERSHIP.

9. WHILE THE PRESS HAS NOT REPORTED ANY ANTI-AMERICAN SENTI-
MENT AMONG TUNISIANS OVER THE PARTICIPATION OF THE AMERICAN
COMPANY ON BEHALF OF LIBYA. MOST TUNISIANS
HAVE FOUND IT DIFFICULT TO UNDERSTAND THAT A PRIVATE AMERICAN
COMPANY WOULD ACT AGAINST THE INTERESTS OF A COUNTRY WITH WHICH
THE US HAS GOOD RELATIONS AND FOR A COUNTRY WITH WHICH US HAS
POOR RELATIONS. MOST TUNISIANS ALSO HAVE BEEN HARDPRESSED TO
UNDERSTAND WHY USG HAS SO FAR BEEN UNABLE TO STOP PARTICIPA-
TION OF AMERICANS. GOT PRESS GUIDANCE TO PAPERS IT CONTROLS HAS
PROSCRIBED ANTI-U.S. REPORTEAGE, AND SEMI-INDEPENDENO "AS-SABAH"
AND "LE TEMPS" HAVE ALSO FOLLOWED THIS LINE. PRESS HAS GIVEN PROM-
INENT PLAY TO OUR STATEMENTS IN WASHINGTON AND IN TUNIS CRITICAL
OF PARTICIPATION OF AMERICAN FIRM, AND THESE HAVE ALSO CONTRIBUTED
TO CALMING SITUATION HERE.

10. MEDIA TREATMENT EMPHASIZING DIPLOMATIC EFFORTS TO FIND A
PEACEFUL SOLUTION TO CONTINENTAL SHELF DISPUTE GIVE IMPRESSION
THAT GOT IS SEEKING NOT TO ALARM PUBLIC AND TO ENCOURAGE LIBYANS
INTO

A MORE REASONABLE ATTITUDE.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
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Disposition Approved on Date:
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Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
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Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
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Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
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Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 TUNIS 3845
Retention: 0
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Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2280171
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: TUNISIAN MEDIA TREATMENT OF CONTINENTAL SHELF DISPUTE
TAGS: PFOR, PLOS, ENRG, SOPN, TS, LY
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/279f4685-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009